

# Bramel declares CCER open



Participants pose for a group photo at the CCER meeting in Ibadan.

Paula Bramel, IITA Deputy Director-General (R4D), on Monday, declared the Center Commissioned External Review (CCER) open and called on scientists to see the occasion as an opportunity to reflect on the past and chart the way forward.

She said the event would help staff define how things could be done better.

The IITA board-backed annual program was attended by scientists from the various IITA

stations in Africa, thus, providing a platform for scientists to share experiences.

Reviewers in this year's CCER are looking at crop improvement programs at IITA with emphasis on partnerships with other institutions, the quality and appropriateness of scientific approaches employed by scientists, and the role of the private sector.

Describing the event as a "creative time", Bramel said CCER was not all

about monitoring but also about taking stock particularly if investments were made in the right direction with a view to considering appropriate steps in the future.

She called on the review team to examine IITA partnerships as regards present efforts aimed at fostering partnerships.

"This will help us in knowing how to optimize our partnerships in terms of what we do and the opportunities we give partners," she added.

# IITA builds capacities of Cameroonian machine fabricators



Cameroonian machine fabricators and IITA staff pose with their newly fabricated machines at IITA Cameroon.

A training workshop for fabricators that was held in Douala, Cameroon, 17–21 November 2009, has successfully helped in building the capacity of machine fabricators in Cameroon.

The IITA-organized workshop has enabled local fabricators to locally produce 100 units of a manual and motorized cassava chopping machines.

Thirteen fabricators from 10 different workshops scattered in all the regions of Cameroon took part in this unique exercise.

The approach has consequently helped Cameroon to introduce cheap, effective, and durable machines for processing cassava tubers.

Thierno Diallo, IITA Postharvest Engineer, says the "good news" is that virtually all the

machines produced during the workshop passed the quality and performance test.

The approach has also set a precedent for standardization and could lead to specialization among African machine fabricators with interrelated economic advantages.

## IITA-IARSAF holds annual conference

The International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows (IARSAF) of IITA will hold its annual symposium on 25 February 2010.

The main theme for the conference is: The impact of climate change on food security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-themes include:

1. Effect and coping strategies of climate change on crop production
2. Effect of climate change on livestock and fisheries: the way forward
3. Economic impact of climate change on food production
4. Impact of climate change on gender
5. Political will to address the problem of climate change

# Researchers and policy makers trained on regional surveillance and control of deadly banana diseases

IITA conducted a five-day training on disease surveillance and control methods to help build the capacity of national partners to combat deadly banana diseases that are threatening the livelihoods and food security of over 70 million people in sub-Saharan Africa.

The training, which took place 25–29 January in Kigali, Rwanda, targeted staff from national research institutions and government bodies from Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

The training covered the major diseases affecting banana, but especially focused on the Banana Bunchy Top Disease (BBTD). A field visit to Rusizi Valley demonstrated practical disease recognition and sample collection. This was followed by demonstrations on disease diagnostic tests using biotechnology tools in the laboratory to confirm the findings of field surveillance.

Hein Bouwmeester, IITA GIS expert based in Tanzania, also trained the participants on spatial disease surveillance methods using Geographical Positioning Systems (GPS) and the development of GIS maps showing the presence and spread of the diseases.

According to Fen Beed, IITA plant pathologist for East and Southern Africa, the training was successful and most importantly, strengthened linkages between staff from national research and national plant protection organizations, and also between the targeted countries.

“The participants also developed harmonized protocols for disease surveillance and identified potential hot spots across



*A group photo of participants drawn from national research and government institutions in eastern and southern Africa*

the region to undertake surveys. They also defined schedules for the surveys, including dispatch of DNA capture kits to IITA Uganda for pathogen diagnostics,” Beed said.

A wrap-up workshop will be held in June in Nairobi to share experiences to optimize protocols for spatial surveys, site characterization, farmer surveys, sample collection, and disease diagnostics in the laboratory. It will also look at how to share

results, link national data to regional maps, and suggest mechanisms to update maps with data generated from new projects or government initiatives.

The training was organized by IITA with the Rwanda Agriculture Development Authority and the Rwandan Agricultural Research Institute (Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Rwanda), and funded by FAO.

## Marcus appointed as GIS Unit Manager in Ibadan



*Marcus*

IITA has appointed Subash Marcus as the Manager of the GIS Unit in Ibadan.

He will manage the Unit to meet the needs of users who request assistance in applying GIS to their research, proposal development, or communications.

GIS Specialist Hein Bouwmeester is also available to help in this research area.

## Announcements

### World Cowpea Conference 2010



IITA, in cooperation with partners – Pulse-CRSP, Purdue University, and ISRA, Senegal – is organizing the 5th World Cowpea

Research Conference to be held on 27 September – 1 October 2010, in Dakar, Senegal. Global cowpea experts will tackle

research issues related to enhancing the profile of cowpea as a viable income generating and food security crop. For more details and to submit papers, please visit the conference Web site at <http://cowpea2010.iita.org>.

Deadline for submission of abstracts:

15 April

Abstracts approval and contact with

presenters: 16 May

Deadline for full paper submission: 30

September

Deadline for early registration: 16 July

### Know your Numbers!

Do you know that you might be hypertensive and that uncontrolled hypertension (high blood pressure) might lead to heart attack or failure, blood vessel damage, kidney damage or failure, stroke and/or vision loss?

A blood pressure reading consists of two numbers: the upper number – the systolic pressure – is the pressure of blood against the artery walls during a heart beat; while the lower number – the diastolic pressure – measures the same pressure between heart beats. Both numbers are important and should always be within the normal range, which is 120/80mmHg or less.

At 120 -130 mmHg (systolic) and/or 80 – 90 mmHg (diastolic), you have pre-hypertension; while a reading of 140 or higher (systolic) and 90 or higher (diastolic) means that you are hypertensive and need to seek medical advice immediately.

Have your blood pressure read and monitored at the IITA Clinic. A blood pressure test is absolutely free! The health-care providers in the clinic will be more than happy to assist.